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ABSTRACT

This paper on delivery systems for preparing and training early childhood educators focuses on three main topics: (1) adequacy of delivery systems and access; (2) market influences on delivery systems; and (3) linking preparation and professional development components. Questions addressed include the following: Would the current preparation and training systems be adequate to meet demand, if resources were plentiful? If not, what is missing? How do early childhood educators commonly access training? How do preparation and training systems influence the early childhood education market? What incentives exist to encourage providers to participate in preparation and training programs? What strategies can be devised to organize better productive career ladders in the field of early childhood education and care? How best can different elements of the delivery system be linked to provide better articulated opportunities of higher quality than presently exist for early childhood educators? How can this be achieved without excluding or discouraging many poor and minority educators who have been long committed to the field? What are the best ways to organize on-the-job professional development opportunities? In conclusion, elements of an articulated, comprehensive model of early childhood training are specified. (RH)

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Delivery Systems

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Remarks Prepared for the

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1) Adequacy of delivery system/access

Would the current preparation and training systems be adequate to meet the demand for preparation and training if resources were plentiful? If not, what's missing?

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What is missing is **articulation** between the current systems. There needs to be articulation between the various units to create a **common core and common language** of training plus a predictable career ladder. This is essential to an effective and efficient training system.

Further, there needs to be a change in the "mind set" that divides "care" and "education" of young children into two different processes. While the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential has been embraced by the Early Childhood profession as a description of the basic and minimal skills needed to care for young children, the CDA may not be viewed as relevant and central course content in the first years of a traditional teacher education program in senior colleges.

Moreover, there may be some striking differences between the fundamental assumptions of the training given to care providers and that given to teachers. Care providers, within the CDA context, are assumed to be autonomous members of a cooperating team. For example, the Competency Goal V is **To Ensure a Well Run Purposeful Program Responsive to Participant Needs.** Competency Goal VI is **To Maintain Commitment to Professionalism.** Both goals are addressed to individual responsibility and may assume that the individual, more than the system within which the individual finds her/himself, is responsible for the conduct of a quality program for children. Many child care situations provide such autonomy and individual accountability.

Teacher training, on the other hand, assumes preparation for functioning within an all encompassing system. Autonomy within the classroom is always tempered by the exigencies of the demands of the "system" whose functioning, priorities, and understandings are not based upon sound early childhood practices.

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Since early childhood educational programs are usually identical to well run child care programs, there should be a bridge between the training provided to care providers and educators. Care providers should be able to become teachers, if they so desire, without having to relearn what they already know. There needs to be a way of mapping out career paths for the high school graduate with a child development class or two, the CDA, the community college graduate, and the college third year student.

How do early childhood educators commonly access training? What is a "typical method" for learning about participating in available programs? Who has limited access? Why?

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Within the population with which I am most familiar (urban community college students), the most common route to concentrated training is through post hiring job demands. If a student has been hired to work within the Head Start program, obtaining a CDA is often a condition of continued employment. As has been described so often, the CDA process often leads to interest in more formalized post secondary education at the college level. Unlike the vast majority of early childhood workers, the CDA with access to a community college, usually does not have finances as a significant barrier.

The CDA's interest in additional education is often thwarted by the following:

1) difficulty in getting to classes after work and returning home safely after dark.

2) problems with child supervision

3) lack of available time and energy when the demands of working and parenthood are one person's responsibility

4) poor educational preparation and self image as learners

5) unawareness of and exposure to the professional milieu

The last two factors contribute to the time which it takes many students to accomplish their educational goals. Remediation and the building up of confidence in many students may take much more time than they have allotted for themselves to achieve their chosen educational goal. Also, many, many very capable students who overcome educational barriers still have not mastered the "lingo" and style which allows them to be received as capable and knowledgable. Thus, they are burdened by a subtle disadvantage which lingers and impedes their professional progress even though they have earned credentials.

There needs to be a rethinking of the requirements for some credentials. Many practitioners need the basic skills. Many who have acquired the basic skills, need to be challenged intellectually and broadened in their view of the real and professional world. We talk glibly of meeting the individual needs of children, but we cannot achieve a method of meeting the individual needs of their teachers.

Further, the delivery of services and the educational process can be varied as well. On site courses, tutorials, competency based long distance instruction, paid long and short term fellowships for early childhood educators to explore the humanities, paid internships, are just some of the strategies which could be included in a multi delivery system to overcome some of the barriers which I have described.

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2) Market influences on delivery systems

How do preparation and training systems influence the early childhood education "market"? Do parents choose educators with higher levels of preparation? What impact does cost have on such choices?

What incentives/disincentives exist to encourage/discourage providers to participate in preparation and training programs? How does this influence the cost of quality?

What strategies can be devised to organize more productive career ladders in the early childhood education and care field?

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Parents who are very well informed and sophisticated about matters of child care and education choose programs with highly trained professionals. Other parents are influenced by convenience, cost, and subtle factors of personality or marketing, in my opinion. Only a mass educational program which will inform parents as consumers of care will change their selection behavior. The major success of anti-smoking, recycling, and environmental awareness campaigns suggests that similar efforts to influence parents about selection of child care could be successful, as well.

The cost factor in selection of child care is unavoidable. Parents cannot choose what they cannot afford. One solution is to have all programs staffed by competent people so that any choice will have positive benefits for the child. However, even programs with economical staff costs will probably charge more than most parents are willing to pay, currently. Therefore, the need to educate parents about the economics of childcare is imperative. Family support measures at any level, municipal, state, federal,

are imperative, also.

The whole issue of cost relates directly to the incentives many early childhood practitioners have for obtaining further education. When rewards are built into the system, the motivation to obtain further education is both present and active in early childhood educators. The usefulness of an articulated career ladder which spans the "two worlds of childhood of the '90's", care and education, is especially evident in this case.

Independent providers do not see immediate return upon investment in additional preparation. Owners of child care facilities fear the cost of staff with superior qualifications. Subsidies must be built into the care system in the form of payments to parents or tax write offs for employers or some combination of incentives to assist the "business" of child care to raise salaries.

Although relatively minor in influence in the early childhood field outside of public school systems, unionization of child care staff may be an impediment to the further professionalization of the field. Care should be taken in negotiations that tenure does not confer automatic promotion to other positions. While unions are useful for obtaining employee benefits, the potential for the alienation of parents demands careful use of union tactics. Also, a careful balance between the rights of employees and the needs of children demands an unique approach to militancy by the early childhood profession.

Strategies to build a career ladder include a close reading of state licensing standards and incorporating them into teacher certification requirements. For one brief moment in Illinois, state licensing standards were used to determine the qualifications of prospective teachers for the state funded prekindergarten programs who did not hold teacher certificates. Since the licensing standards incorporated the CDA, there was potential for tying the social welfare and education establishment together. The experiment did not last beyond one year, but the model is there and the potential for cross referencing two systems exists.

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3) Linking preparation and professional development components

How best can different elements of the delivery system be linked to provide better articulated, higher quality opportunities for early childhood educators? How can this be achieved without excluding or discouraging many poor and minority educators who have been long committed to the early childhood field?

What are the best methods to organize on-the-job professional development opportunities?

Describe the role that each of the non-governmental players in the delivery system can play in supporting better preparation and training.

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While employment opportunities within the early childhood field may be extended to persons who lack training and/or education, there is no justification, from the point of view of the welfare of children, to allow them to persist in employment without being required to meet standards which are the same for everyone. Taking into consideration some of the barriers described previously in this paper, some innovations in training delivery should be implemented. Both remedial and academic courses can be offered at job sites. After school and/or child care programs can be developed using combinations of state, federal, and donated funds, plus fees. The use of role models and mentors should be expanded and made almost mandatory to provide guidance in matters which are beyond academic requirements. The awarding of credit for well prepared and literate portfolios could be a strategy for shortening the requirements for formal course work.

However, there must always be a recognition that everyone who spends several hours a day with children has a strong influence upon their educational achievement. The development of language is cential to early education. Therefore, it is crucial that early childhood practitioners be literate. If on site education can be provided, literacy instruction should be the second priority after basic child care skills have been mastered. Without the language skills, there is a limit to the usefulness of further academic training.

In describing the roles of the various institutions which can help to deliver training, the secondary schools should be included. Basic child development information and parenting skills should be a mandatory component of the high school curriculum for everyone. With that base, a variety of options could be available for prospective practitioners. Some patterns are described below:

High school--CDA--Community college (with credit awarded for the CDA)--Four year college (with credit awarded for both the CDA and community college courses)--Certification or academic degree in early childhood.

High school--Community college (with credit given for actual work with children in combination with high school coursework)--Four year college-- Certification or degree

High school--Four year college (with credit given for actual work with children in combination with high school coursework)--Certification or degree.

Not everyone wishes to be certified or to earn a four year degree. However, the career ladder should reward persons who do obtain further training. Inservice training should be a part of every practitioner's experience no matter what his/her level of training. However, in service training is rarely comprehensive and sufficiently sequential in nature to substitute for organized academic programs. Inservice training can be useful if portfolics are being devroped for credit.

An articulated comprehensive model of early childhood training can be provided with the cooperation of the high schools, community colleges, and four year institutions. Resource and referral agencies can provide inservice for practitioners, consumer education for parents, and referrals to educational institutions for prospective early childhood educators.

Head Start, through its commitment to CDA training, should continue to provide both the motivation, financial support, and professional rewards. A similar model should be put into place for any Centers receiving Federal funds. NCATE should include CDA in its model of teacher training in order to provide coherence and continuity in early childhood training. NAEYC should continue its work on a comprehensive professional model for promulgation to the professional and regulatory entities which serve early childhood programs.

Unions and corporate and the for-profit sector should recognize their mutual interests in obtaining subsidies for the cost of care for children and training of staff and join with both parents and professional groups to work toward that end. Finally, there should be a massive campaign to promote the importance of the trained, competent early childhood educator in all settings. Perhaps that role can be best performed by the philanthropic organizations.